Letters To The Editor

'Intellectual Imperialism'

The apparent intent of your March 10 editorial, "Intellectual Imperialism," on Mr. William T. Couch's criticisms of the recent resolution of the American Textbook Publishers Institute is soundly humanitarian. It carries, however, certain very erroneous and damaging implications which should be corrected.

Mr. Couch does an injustice to the American Textbook Publishers Institute in implying that their resolution urging that scientific, technical and educational books be included in our Government's plans for economic aid to the devastated countries is motivated by commercial considerations or reflects "intellectual imperialism." I know of many outright gifts by leading American publishers of books marketable in the United States in response to urgent requests from abroad, contributed through reputable American organizations cooperating with our commission (the CIER) to aid in educational reconstruction.

These gifts were made without any thought of publicity and with no expectation of gain. The dollar shortage has virtually eliminated a foreign market which has never been profitable to the publishers of textbooks.

I agree entirely with Mr. Couch and the author of your editorial that "American culture and learning cannot be extended through power politics." But it is hard to see what this has to do with the textbook publishers' resolution. This resolution merely urges that books have a place in the Marshall Plan. A realistic Marshall Plan must include books and other training assistance to permit these countries to help themselves.

Visiting recently a dozen European countries on missions to or on behalf of UNESCO, I found that technical and professional books in the English language, literature and even modern textbooks are literally worth their weight in gold. Students, teachers and other professional and technical people deprived of contact with their fields during the war years read, reread, review, excerpt and quote them to an extent undreamed of in this country. Several million contributed books and periodicals have already been sent through the American Book Center, Library of Congress by American organizations, institutions and individuals for forwarding to the devastated countries.

To provide books and other materials which the devastated countries request to aid them in reconstruction is not intellectual imperialism, but is simply enlightened self-interest and good common sense.

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